

**Report on homesteads on Morton Haven farm, Report on  
homesteads on Morton Haven farm, Remainder of Portion 1 of  
the Farm Tweedie Hall No. 11880 Petrusstroom district, uMngeni  
Municipality**



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### 1. Introduction

Debbie Whelan from Archaic Consulting was requested to carry out an impact assessment with regard to the labourers homesteads on Morton Haven farm, with respect to their destruction in event of the development of the property. It is understood that it is merely the labourers homesteads numbered 1 through 5 situated on the western edge of the farm which are affected. This means that the other structures associated with the main part of the farm, three other vernacular/ indigenous buildings, (one orthogonal and two rondawels) the main house, the new house, and the farmyard buildings are to be left intact. It is noted that should any of these be required for alteration or demolition, then a separate study should be undertaken.

### 2. Methodology and statement of expertise

The site was visited by Debbie Whelan on 19 August 2009 and a short survey carried out. The homestead complexes and the buildings on the main part of the farm were visually assessed and photographed. The initial suspicion that most of these structures were not 60 years old was corroborated by the lack of evidence of structures on this part of the farm in 1937 aerial photographs 117B\_001\_54099 and 117B\_001\_54100 but also by the testimony of Bhambazile Ndlovu, who moved to work for Donal Blackhurst around 1953. Prior to this he was living on a different part of the Morton farms. Reference is also made to the Heritage Impact Assessment on the proposed Blackhurst Manor Development Howick, Kwazulu-Natal for Afzelia Environmental Consultants Date: (dated May2009) as prepared by Gavin Anderson of Umlando: Archaeological Tourism And Resource Management for Afzelia Consulting. The brief was to investigate only those buildings referred to on page 11 of the above report, with a view to complete demolition. This map is reproduced in Annexure I. Debbie Whelan was also given to understand that Bhambazile Mkhize, over eighty years of age, is resident in homestead numbered 'A'. An interview with him on a different matter has reference.

The buildings in question are all of vernacular construction, wattle and daub, mud and cement plaster, corrugated sheeting roofs as well as thatch. They are owner- built in the sense that they were not erected for labour housing by an agent other than farmworkers or their colleagues.

Debbie Whelan has an academic and practical understanding of traditional and indigenous vernacular structures<sup>1</sup> and a background in architectural conservation, anthropology and archaeology.

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<sup>1</sup> See citations by Whelan in the references

### 3. Brief history of site

James Morton purchased the whole of Groot Vallei 941 consisting of 2522 acres in 1875, and it passed into his son's name, also James, in 1895. James died in 1930, and only in 1939, was a subdivision of 100 acres was created, registered in the name of Eliza Morton, and a second of 174 acres, subdivision B shared by Howard and Elizabeth Swan, the children of Agatha Morton. The Remainder was registered in the name of Euphemia Blackhurst and in 1953 split: a half share of this registered to Avalon Blackhurst, and the other half to Donal Blackhurst. It would seem plausible that Bhambazile Ndlovu moved onto this portion of the property at this time, as he came across to work for Blackhurst.

***The following is background information with regard to the farm. It is important to note the construction of the first silo, as, although this falls out of the brief, this is a structure worth noting.***

Because of the proximity to Pietermaritzburg and the markets, the Petrus Stroom area was surveyed and settled reasonably early. The original land grants were to Afrikaners, most of who sold off the land reasonably quickly to English immigrants. The history of Howick town and the Lions River district is well documented in the historical record, so for the purposes of this report the author shall not dwell on this information.<sup>2</sup>

The history of these farms is inextricably tied to James Morton and his descendants. The information contained here comes from the limited edition volume penned by Donal Blackhurst, *My family background*.

James Morton was born in 1846, and married Eliza Whyte whose father was Laird of *Tweedie Hall*, a property in Scotland. Her mother came from *Blackwood*, hence the names of the farms in Natal. (Blackhurst;2003:65) They moved onto the Natal *Tweedie Hall* farm in 1869, and built the first house out of wattle and daub, which was flooded with the inundation of Midmar Dam. (Blackhurst;2003:67) George Cato did the conveyancing for James Morton when he first bought the property (Blackhurst;2003:115) Blackhurst notes that the 'The original grant of the land, known as *Alleman's Drift*, of which *Tweedie Hall* was a small portion, was dated January the 1<sup>st</sup> 1837 and made out in favour of Johanna Kokemore, widow of the late Pieter Schalle Grobbelaar. James Morton bought the sub-division that he called *Tweedie Hall* from the insolvent Estate of Pieter Hans Zeederberg for the sum of £338 10-00'. Between 1827 and 1868, when James chose his future farm, the original grant appears to have been subdivided and to have changed hands on several occasions. The most recent transfer was dated August the 20<sup>th</sup> 1852, when it was sold to Pieter Laurence Graham and Pieter Hans Zeederberg. The extent of this initial purchase of land by James is described in Deed of Transfer No. 134/1869 as being 'fourteen hundred and twelve acres, more or less.' (Blackhurst;2003:115)

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<sup>2</sup> The reader is urged to contact the Howick Museum, the Provincial Archives Repository, and consult printed matter such as Noo Dorning's *Chimneys in the Clouds* which deals with properties in the area, Brian Kearney's *Verandas in the mist- the architecture of the Dargle, Howick and Karkloof* which has a more architectural slant, Eric Rosenthal's *The SARMCOL story* and Walter Silaule's thesis *Established at the Edge* which deals with KwaMevana. For agricultural matters Mazower's *Agriculture, farm labour and the state in the Natal Midlands 1940-1960* is located in Economic History, and Debbie Bonnin's seminal work *Class, Consciousness and Conflict in the Natal Midlands 1940-1987* The *Case of the BTR Sarmcol Workers* has a more political slant. For sheer background interest, most readers will find *John Shedden Dobie, South African Journal 1862-61*, edited by Alan Hattersley, a delight to read. As with all small towns, the Women's Institute published a History of Howick at the end of the 1960's which also includes some information.

James Morton was a progressive farmer who ran sheep and cattle. He was one of the three men to set up Natal Creamery which later became NCD. He also tried tea and roses. (Blackhurst;2003:75) He also agitated for the formation of the Howick Farmers Association which was formed in June 1884. This was eventually taken over by the Lions River Agricultural Society. Access to markets for the produce was increased with the opening of Tweedie Hall Station in 1884 (Blackhurst;2003:78)

James Morton was reasonably aggressive in his land acquisitions- in 1902 he bought 1965 acres from William Fowler? – This land was situated close to the source of the Umgeni. He also purchased the remainder of *Petrusstroom*, and renamed it *Neukhead*. (Blackhurst;2003:84) He also purchased lots 3 and 4 of *Hebron* which were then known as *Horse Shoe*, and consolidated them to *Craignethan*. Lot D of *Ivanhoe* near Impendle was purchased for summer grazing. The first mile of wire fencing was put up at *Tweedie Hall* in 1875. This did not go down well with neighbours and transport riders alike. (Blackhurst;2003:85) At this time, there was mainly Indian labour on the farm working out indentures. In 1894, there were 300 Indian labourers and only 12 local Africans. (Blackhurst;2003:86) Morton also had 400 acres under wattle. (Blackhurst;2003:87) However, from 1910 onwards, Morton began to consolidate his properties, selling off tracts of land and leasing out over 2000 acres to Allan Ireland and John Fisher. This left a small portion of land at *Tweedie Hall* including the main house. Lease conditions stipulated that a homestead be constructed on *Morton Haven*, and this is when the house was built. (Blackhurst;2003:105) 'In April 1925, he leased a portion of his land to Kanyeah Harry, an Indian, for £15 per annum and gave him permission to erect a trading store. This is the origin of the two Tweedie Stores and the various adjacent houses' (Blackhurst;2003:106) In 1927 he leased 600 acres of *Craignethan*, including the buildings, to Frederick Charles Rycroft, a farmer from Harrismith, for £90 per annum. Somewhere along the line, *Blackwood* was leased to Mr. Mayo, father of my long-time manager, Archie.' (Blackhurst;2003:106)

James and Eliza's son, James Morton Junior, was born in 1868 (Blackhurst;2003:68) The other children were Lila, Euphemia, and Agatha. In 1906 Walter Blackhurst married Euphemia Morton- she was the youngest daughter of James and Eliza who was born in 1881 at Tweedie Hall. (Blackhurst;2003:23) After they were married they went to live at Hurst Park in Durban. Effie inherited *Morton Haven*. James Morton Junior concentrated his efforts on the *Mount Ashley* portion of the farms. (Blackhurst;2003:119) James Morton Junior died in 1936 as a result of complications from a bout of appendicitis. (Blackhurst;2003:120) His death marked the beginning of six decades of occupation by women- Lila for some 27 years and then Avalon Blackhurst for 38 years. (Blackhurst;2003:120) Lila Morton died at the age of 91 in 1963. She was born in 1872 (Blackhurst;2003:122)

James Morton died of a heart attack on Christmas Day in 1930. (Blackhurst;2003:107) He was 84. In his obituary, a note reads 'When Mr' and Mrs' Morton first took possession of their land there was but one tree to grace the landscape. To-day, as one walks down the stately avenue of beautiful trees of various species leading to the homestead, one is inspired.' (Blackhurst;2003:107) When James Morton died, the farm was still reasonably extensive. On Christmas Day 1930, his Estate was able to dispose of the following:

***Tweedie Hall and Sub A (known as Morton Haven) went to Euphemia Blackhurst, nee Morton. However, Lila had usufruct until her death. Lila also inherited some of the Hebron lands adjoining the Umgeni River. James Morton Junior was left the Groot Vallei lands that he had been farming in his own right. Agatha received Blackwood- including Glen Rosa. (Blackhurst;2003:116)***

Between James death in 1930 and 1935, Eliza, his wife, his son James, his daughter Agatha also all died. (Blackhurst;2003:116) Lila was the beneficiary of land from James Morton Junior's *Groot Vallei* land, parts of *Hebron*, parts of *Petrusstroom* and half of the *Ivanhoe* farm at Impendle. Howard and Elsa Swan received half of *Blackwood* each from Agatha's estate. Euphemia received 2000 acres of *Groot Vallei* and the other half of the Impendle farm.

(Blackhurst;2003:116) Avalon had already received *Tweedie Hall* and Donal Blackhurst, Euphemia's son, *Morton Haven*. On Euphemia's death he and his sister Avalon inherited a portion of the *Groot Vallei* lands. (Blackhurst;2003:116) 'In those days, if one transferred property to a relative more than five years before death, it was excluded from the estate for death duty purposes.' (Blackhurst;2003:50)

Eskom became available in the 1940's and *Tweedie Hall* and *Morton Haven* were two of the first farms in the area to be electrified. Lila was engaged to Maurice Sutton from Karkloof for two years. This was called off. (Blackhurst;2003:122) Before she died, Lila started a farm school – Blackhurst suggests this was as early as the 1920's (Blackhurst;2003:123) 'She organized it and ran it without any Government assistance or, indeed, knowledge. Today it is a recognized Farm School and is located on land owned by Dr Robin Stephenson. I think that he has taken over the responsibility of running it.' (Blackhurst;2003:123)

Midmar Dam was flooded in 1963 (Blackhurst;2003:71) However, many years previously, an attempt was made in 1929 by a Mr. Brokensha to persuade James Morton to join the Lions River Lake Syndicate which was an early attempt at flooding Midmar. (Blackhurst;2003:106) Subsequent to this, land was expropriated by the Department of Water Affairs for the construction of Midmar Dam. *Morton Haven* was the farm that experienced the greatest loss of land. (Blackhurst;2003:116)

Walter Haw from Willow Grange was employed at *Tweedie Hall* as a manager but he soon left and Guy Nicholls took over. (Blackhurst;2003:47) When he died, Archie Mayo, whose father was a tenant on *Blackwood*, took over- he had fought in East Africa and then ran the farms for the next 36 years- he was seen to be a good, practical farmer, and Donal Blackhurst concedes that Archie had a free hand in the running of the farm (Blackhurst;2003:48-9)

*Tweedie Hall* was transferred to Avalon Blackhurst in 1941, and *Morton Haven* to Donal Blackhurst. Lila Morton lived at *Tweedie Hall* until her death in 1963 when Avalon moved in.

Avalon Blackhurst was born in 1915. She became a doctor. She served in the Balkans in World War Two, then practised as a paediatrician in London and then in Durban. She inherited *Tweedie Hall* in 1941, but Lila had usufruct. She moved to *Tweedie Hall* after the death of Lila. (Blackhurst;2003:161) She died in 2001.

In Chief Justice Neville James' Centenary speech for the arrival of the Morton's in Natal, in 1968, he noted: 'They built, first of all, a wattle and daub house, and then a stone cottage, and eventually this lovely house that we are in today! It is difficult to imagine that, when they arrived, all this land was bare rolling veld. There were no trees! There was no natural bush! There were practically no habitations, and they came to it and they saw it and what a miracle they performed! Because, when I first saw this place, 50 years ago, the trees had already been planted...' (Blackhurst;2003:164) He went on to note that Morton was the first to ring-fence his farm, and that the silos that he had constructed were still in use by Donal Blackhurst on *Morton Haven*.

In 1948 Donal Blackhurst married Sheila Magennis and they built a wattle-and-daub *rondawel* on Morton Haven. (Blackhurst;2003:218) The development of Midmar Dam in 1963 swallowed up most of the farm. The developers offered to purchase the full portion, as this rendered the farm uneconomical, but Donal Blackhurst started a successful Holstein stud instead. (Blackhurst;2003:227) Archie Mayo ran the farm for 37 years, and left in 1980 to take up beef farming. (Blackhurst;2003:228). 'After living in Durban for a while, Joe and Elsa (Swan) decided to make their home on their farm, *Blackwood*, at Tweedie, and moved there in 1947. This was a part of James Morton's estate. They moved into the old house that my grandfather had built in about 1920, a replica of two other houses that he had built on his farms. The first was on *Morton Haven*, which he built for his tenant Allan Ireland, and the other on *Craignethan*. The one on *Morton Haven* is still in use, although several changes have been made over the years. The one on *Craignethan* was demolished by one of the later owners, Keith Reid.' (Blackhurst;2003:287)

#### 4. Assessment of structures on site

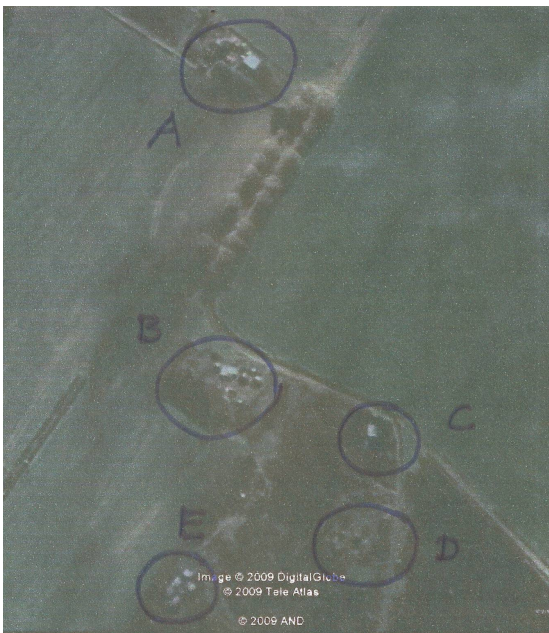
The manifestations of homestead structures have changed over the decades, given a variety of influences such as material, house form, cultural constraints and the slow collapse of polygamy. Whereas what is known as the Central Cattle Pattern, (as suggested by Evers, 1988) prevailed for a long time, the central cattle byre as a structural and functional space has been reduced in contemporary times on these midland farms, due in large part in restrictions in stock keeping, as well as terrain and impositions by individual farmers.

Also, 'traditional' forms such as circular buildings, have been rationalized into orthogonal buildings, largely through accessibility of western furniture, the stove (as Frescura suggests) and acculturation. Importantly, many homesteads retain a circular structure or two, typically used as the 'gogo's' house, or a space used for ritual practice, with a central earthen hearth and an *umsamo* at the rear. This means that contemporary homesteads tend to be a mixed agglomeration of building forms, which reflect liminal belief systems as well as multiple generational occupation.

The site in question consists of 5 homesteads (see map in Appendix I) loosely gathered together by a dirt track. They are spatially disconnected, and do not act as a unit. Although the proximity of the homesteads B, C, D and E seems communal in the diagram below, they are not associated with a central communal space.

The 1937 aerial photographs were initially scrutinized for evidence of these structures, or their predecessors, on this part of the farm. What is evident is that this area was empty at that time, as well as the presence of a group of homesteads to the north east, which are situated in an area currently covered by Midmar Dam. It is known that many farmworkers had to relocate their homes at the time of the inundation, and it is suspected that some of the homesteads in this complex may have been living at this prior site before the flooding in 1963.

It is thus submitted that these homesteads are not older than 60 years, and are not subject to approval from Amafa for demolition. The descriptions which follow are thus brief.



**Fig 1: Google Earth diagram showing the structures intended for demolition**



## 4.1 Homestead 'A'

Homestead 'A', according to the tenant farmer, is occupied by Bhambazile Ndlovu, who was the *iNduna* for the Mkhize in the 1980's. He was born on the Morton farm as was his father, and worked for the Blackhurst family from a young age. Homestead 'A' consists of a substantial 'iflat' (painted green in the photograph) a rondawel, a double pitched structure and a couple of motley orthogonal structures. The buildings are arranged around a central space.



**Fig 2: homestead A from track**



**Fig 3: homestead A from north**

### Significance of structure

Homestead A	local	regional	National	international
Architectural significance	low	medium	low	low
Technical significance	low	low	low	low
Scientific significance	low	low	low	low
Social significance	low	low	low	low
Historical significance	low	low	low	low

## 4.2 Homestead 'B'

Homestead 'B' is substantial and consists of three rondawels, a substantial *'iflat'* and, again, a myriad orthogonal buildings.



*Fig 4: homestead B from the track*



*Fig 5: homestead B from the track*

### Significance of structure

Homestead B	local	regional	National	international
Architectural significance	low	medium	low	low
Technical significance	low	low	low	low
Scientific significance	low	low	low	low
Social significance	low	low	low	low
Historical significance	low	low	low	low



### 4.3 Homestead 'C'

Homestead C is positioned next to the track and consists of 1 substantial orthogonal structure with a corrugated sheeting roof, and a second, smaller two roomed structure (possibly part kitchen) out of badly maintained wattle and daub. There is a front yard which connects the two buildings.



**Fig 6: Homestead C from the track**



**Fig 7: homestead C, adjoining structure**

#### Significance of structure

Homestead C	local	regional	National	international
Architectural significance	low	medium	low	low
Technical significance	low	low	low	low
Scientific significance	low	low	low	low
Social significance	low	low	low	low
Historical significance	low	low	low	low

#### 4.4 Homestead 'D'

This consists of two dilapidated rondawels and a central two-room house feeding onto an open space. The condition of the structures is not good.



*Fig 8: Homestead D from track*

##### Significance of structure

<b>Homestead D</b>	local	regional	National	international
Architectural significance	low	medium	low	low
Technical significance	low	low	low	low
Scientific significance	low	low	low	low
Social significance	low	low	low	low
Historical significance	low	low	low	low

#### 4.5 Homestead 'E'

This consists of a large rondawel and four orthogonal structures of vernacular construction under double pitched corrugated sheeting roofs. Again they are grouped around a central courtyard, and enclosed by fencing.



*Fig 9: homestead E from track*

##### Significance of structure

<b>Homestead A</b>	local	regional	National	international
Architectural significance	low	medium	low	low
Technical significance	low	low	low	low
Scientific significance	low	low	low	low
Social significance	low	low	low	low
Historical significance	low	low	low	low

## 5. Recommendations

Whereas the 1937 photographs show structures such as rondawels and monopitch 'iflat' next to the main farmhouse and where the current 'compound' up at the main farm is, there is no evidence of houses in the area under investigation. It is important to note that the inundation of Midmar in 1963 also affected many of the labour homesteads, which had to move to higher land. It is noted above that Morton Haven was especially hard hit in terms of land loss. Indeed, aerial photograph 117B\_001\_54099 clearly shows homesteads on a part of the farm now under water.

It is seriously doubted that these structures are over 60 years old, subjecting them to Amafa protection. However, even though the Heritage Act (No 4 of 2008) has provision for the protection of indigenous building types and practices, these structures are representative of thousands of others provincially, and are not necessarily good examples of their type. In addition, they do not form an architectural landscape, situated as they are somewhat distant from each other.

***It is thus recommended that since these structures comprising homesteads A though E are not protected in terms of the 60 year clause of the KwaZulu-Natal Heritage Act no 4 of 2008, nor are they outstanding examples of architectural buildings which demonstrate technical excellence, and are not specifically associated with any event or person, they can be demolished without a permit from Amafa.***

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## Appendix I



**Appendix II: Arial Photograph 117B\_001\_54099**

